

APPENDIX II

PEREGRINATIONS OF A DISTRICT

Alone among small nations, SMOM, the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, has recognized the close connection between mobility and survival. When threatened by enemies domestic or foreign, the country simply picked up and moved. From its founding (as the Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem) in Jerusalem in 1113 A. D., the nation moved to Acre (1197), Krak (1271), Margat (1285); thence to Cyprus (1291) and Rhodes (1309) where it remained until its expulsion in 1523. Without a base for seven years, the Order was granted a refuge at Malta in 1530, where (ever grateful) it remained until its expulsion from there in 1798. From Malta to Messina to Rome, where it currently occupies the second floor of a downtown office building, SMOM has been a poor pilgrim ever in search of a home.

Apropos the Philadelphia District: it too has been a wanderer. Since its founding in 1866, the District has called over a dozen places home, or tried to. From its first office, in a renovated private dwelling at 209 South Sixth Street, the District began its hegira from one Philadelphia address to another. It first moved to 1125 Girard Street; then to Fifteenth and Arch Streets; next to the Witherspoon Building, 1319-1321 Walnut Street, where it remained through World War I and into the 1920's (at the same time leasing office space for Military Procurement at 607 Manhattan Life Building, Fourth and Walnut Streets); the mid-20's found the District headquartered at the Schaff Building, 1505 Race Street, but not for long. By 1930, it had shifted to the Gimbel Building, 35 South Ninth Street, from whence it again moved in 1935 to the sixth,

ninth, and tenth floors of the Custom House, Second and Chestnut Streets. World War II arrived and with it came the movers. In March 1942, the District moved again, this time to 1400 Penn Mutual Building, near the corner of Sixth and Walnut Streets, the site of its original home, where it remained until 1946.

In that year, by now accustomed to short runs, the District moved to 121 North Broad Street, and again (for the Supply Division) to 1420 Walnut Street in February 1951; to 5000 Wissahickon Avenue in June 1954; and back to the Philadelphia Custom House in August 1961, where happily, it has remained ever since. *Esperez, voyageurs du monde!*, which freely translated means there may be hope for the wanderers of the world.



U.S. Custom House, Philadelphia.